

Because of your interest in homeland security, I wanted to let you know that I have requested a meeting with officials from the Department of Homeland Security, Office of National Drug Control Policy, Drug Enforcement Administration, Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management to gather information and ensure they are working to develop an effective, coordinated strategy to protect our nation's public lands and local citizens from the violence and problems that are associated with the ongoing marijuana production. The rampant illegal production of marijuana on our public lands is outrageous and unacceptable and is putting citizens at risk. According to the Drug Enforcement Agency, 3.68 million marijuana plants were seized on federal lands between January and November of 2008. Local law enforcement officials believe that most of this marijuana production is being run by Mexican drug cartels. These drug traffickers are increasingly turning to violence and have fired on law enforcement officers on a number of recent occasions. Their actions jeopardize the lives of our law enforcement officers and citizens using the land for recreation.

Local law enforcement agencies have expressed concerns that the federal government is not providing the necessary support to protect our public lands from the large-scale marijuana plantations operated by drug traffickers. Make no mistake, this is fundamentally a federal responsibility. For this reason, I have requested a joint meeting with the relevant federal agencies to gather more information about the federal government's efforts and help ensure that counter-narcotics efforts are well coordinated and are receiving the resources and attention necessary to effectively address this serious challenge. It is time for the federal government to meet its responsibilities with a sense of urgency. I will continue my efforts to ensure that our law enforcement officials have the necessary resources to fight this growing problem.